DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 738 EA 021 367

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TITLE Addressing Women's Issues in Educational Administration Preparation Programs.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administration; *Administrator Education; Administrator Selection; *Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Females; Higher Education; *Women Faculty; Womens Education

ABSTRACT

Not only are women underrepresented in educational administration, they are disproportionately underrepresented in line for administrative roles as compared with female representation in staff positions. Women, with their human relations perspectives, dominate staff development jobs; however, it is the assistant principal rather than the curriculum coordinator who typically becomes a principal. Faculty and administration responsible for the development of administration preparation programs have the opportunity to modify existing programs and positively affect female participation in administration. Women's issues must be integrated into the administrative program's curriculum by updating textbooks and broadening course lectures/presentations to include relevant women's issues. Women administrators can function as role models while informing students of the special challenges for females in administration. Additionally, a balance of male and female administrative program faculty members is necessary. Program evaluation by current students and past graduates may identify possible sex inequities and provide valuable information for future use in program planning and revision. Administration programs in cooperation with school districts can offer workshops, seminars, and other programs designed to attract qualified women into administrative careers. Graduate followup studies, program sponsored events, and graduate assistance may also be effective in modifying the male domination of the administrative profession. (KM)

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ADDRESSING WOMEN'S ISSUES
IN
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

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November 1989

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ADDRESSING WOMEN'S ISSUES IN ADMINISTRATION PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Significant issues related to women in educational administration have been much discussed in the professional literature during the past decade ranging from women's relative underrepresentation in administration to their allegedly different leadership styles. These issues have been addressed by personnel both in the schools and in administration preparation programs. Yet, preparation programs in collaboration with the schools are most strategically positioned to address the unique problems confronting women aspiring to as well as serving in administrative positions.

The continuing underrepresentation of women in administration has been documented by the National Center for Education Information which reported that " . . . 96 percent of superintendents and 76 percent of principals in public schools are men. This contrasts with 69 percent of teachers in public schools who are women."[1] Not only are women generally underrepresented in educational administration, they are disproportionately underrepresented in line as compared to staff positions. Various explanations of this phenomenon have been offered. In one of the more intriguing observations, Schlecty and Vance have noted that it is individuals with a human relations perspective (women) who dominate staff development positions.

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[1]C. Emily Fiestritzer, Profile of School Administrators in the U.S., (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information, 1988), p. 3.

However, it is the assistant principal rather than the curriculum coordinator who typically becomes a principal. "Line authority goes to those who emphasize strategy, structure and systems."[2]

Faculty and administrators responsible for the development of administration preparation programs have the opportunity to experiment with program modifications which will inform while modifying attitudes and developing skills which are likely to lead to positive changes in women's participation in administration.

In assessing a program to determine which aspects need to be modified, attention can be focused on curriculum, faculty selection, student recruitment, program evaluation, graduate follow-up studies, program sponsored events, and assistance to graduates.

CURRICULUM

Shakeshaft, Gilligan, and Pierce have described their approach to addressing women's issues in administration programs through offering a special course, "Women in Administration," designed to modify women's attitudes and beliefs about themselves and their professional roles.[3] While this option can be an effective strategy for addressing women's issues, it is not always feasible to offer a special course. Furthermore, it impacts only those students selecting the course. More comprehensive program modifications requiring full program staff commitment impact everyone.

If women's issues are to be effectively addressed in administration programs, they must be integrated in the various components of the

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[2]Phillip C. Schlechty and Victor S. Vance, "Recruitment, Selection, and Retention: The Shape of the Teaching Force," The Elementary School Journal, 83 (March, 1985), p. 480.

[3]Charol Shakeshaft, Arlene Gilligan, and Dorothy Pierce, "Preparing Women School Administrators," Phi Delta Kappan, 66 (September, 1984), pp. 67-68.

curriculum. The omission of women's issues in administration textbooks becomes obvious in reviewing the index of major texts. Information on sex differences, for example, data on the differential employment patterns of males and females in administration are seldom included in textbooks. Implications of this situation are twofold. First, textbooks need to be modified; authors of administration textbooks need to include appropriate content on women's issues as they write and revise. Second, this deficiency in textbooks makes it especially important that the topic be given due recognition through the use of other instructional strategies and resources. Course lectures/presentations should include relevant content. Women who are successful administrators can visit administration classes as guest lecturers to talk with classes, respond to questions and offer insights into women's experiences as administrators. Women administrators can be interviewed and videotaped in their school settings for later replaying to administration classes. These women can serve as much needed role models while informing students of the special challenges for women in administration.

Course assignments can provide opportunities for including content on women and gender. Required assignments such as critiquing journal articles on gender-related issues can partially compensate for the paucity of content in textbooks. Interested students who have become aware of women's issues through lectures/presentations can be encouraged to write research papers, theses, and to develop other class projects around related themes. Specialized bibliographies can be made available for reference, however, even more importantly, related references need to be included in more comprehensive course bibliographies.

Women's issues can provide rich content for class discussions because

they are value-laden issues about which there may be a diversity of opinion. For example, the literature regarding women's allegedly different leadership styles can provoke considerable debate and discussion. Case studies of women's actual experiences in administration can be collected and hypothetical ones constructed to stimulate class discussions which illuminate issues and suggest effective coping strategies.

In programs in which there are elective courses in areas such as computer science, statistics, school finance, school law, etc., there needs to be assurance that the course enrollment patterns related to gender reflect the enrollment patterns in the program. Evidence of women's underenrolling in such courses should become the impetus for a special effort to enroll women through better advisement and perhaps the availability of special support groups which could help women cope with math anxiety, for example. Similarly, optional sequences within programs should be examined for sex differences. Is enrollment skewed in some programs? Are more males than females enrolling in a school business official sequence? If separate elementary and secondary programs are offered, what is the nature of the enrollment? In both elementary and secondary sequences, one would ideally expect the ratios of male to female students to correspond to the ratios of male to female teachers in the elementary and secondary schools respectively. This should be a goal.

In evaluating essay and other more subjective exams, it is important to be sensitive to the possible effect of gender on responses. For example, the literature abounds in references to the fact that women enter administration with many more years of teaching experience on the average than men with a consequent impact upon their perspective and thinking. It has been proposed that these women may in their roles as administrators

have a stronger identification with and think more like teachers. It could be expected that this perspective would be reflected in responses to exam questions. An instructor aware of this possibility would be advised to evaluate such responses in light of these different perspectives and their origins. Similarly, in class discussion, perspectives may vary based on the differential experiences of women and men. The impact of experience on students' perceptions and attitudes needs to be recognized and further studied; it is an area of potentially fruitful and fascinating research.

The Association of American Colleges' Project on the Status and Education of Women has reviewed research relevant to gender differences in classroom interaction and has reported studies showing that in formal groups of men and women, " . . . the men talk more than women; women talk for longer periods and take more turns speaking; men exert more control over the topic of conversation; and men interrupt women much more frequently than women interrupt men."[4] Even though administration programs now often enroll equal numbers of women and men, administration has been traditionally perceived as a male domain. This perception might foster the kind of dominance described above. It would seem desireable to identify possible inequities in classroom discussion. For administration program faculty, peer evaluation would be one method of identifying such inequities - possibly through observing classroom interation using an instrument such as the Project's "Student-Faculty Communications Checklist" which includes questions such as:[5]

1. What is the number of males versus females called on to answer questions?

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[4]Roberta M. Hall, The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women, (Washington, D.C.: Project on the Status and Education of Women of the Association of American Colleges, 1982), p. 7.

[5]Ibid., p. 21.

2. Which students (male or female) participate in class more frequently through answering questions or making comments? Is the number disproportional enough that you should encourage some students to participate more frequently?

3. Do interruptions occur when an individual is talking? If so, who does the interrupting?

4. Is your verbal response to students positive? aversive? encouraging? Is it the same for all students? If not, what is the reason?

The finding of significant interaction differences would present a considerable challenge to the most skillful instructor, however, it would be worthy of his/her effort to modify the situation.

FACULTY

Inasmuch as a major gender problem in administration has been the lack of role models and mentors for women, programs must strive to have a balance of male and female faculty members - full-time and part-time. The hiring of selected part-time or adjunct faculty can supplement a predominantly male full-time faculty until more balance can be achieved. Women who have had special success as administrators and support women's achievements can be invited to serve as part-time or adjunct faculty.

With the increasing importance of the clinical internship in administration programs, there is a concurrent increase in public school personnel involvement in administration programs. In selecting sites for placement, the gender of prospective site supervisors becomes significant. However, it should not be assumed that same sex assignments are necessarily preferable. Rather, women students should have opportunities to work with and be supervised by women. For individual women, same-sex supervisors and/or college/university supervisors can serve as much needed role models and mentors.

Stressing the need for women students to be exposed to positive female role models is not intended to diminish the importance of the involvement of male students and supervisors/faculty in this effort. While

the literature suggests that role models are most often of the same sex, ideally, it would seem, males and females would serve as role models (and mentors) for each others. This would substantially extend the range of available models and mentors while possibly contributing to the elimination of sex stereotypes.

In addition to program faculty having responsibility for including appropriate gender-related content in their courses and for being sensitive to gender-related issues, some faculty may choose to pursue gender-related topics in their writing, research and service. This activity can indirectly enrich program curriculum while contributing to the larger professional community.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Student recruitment efforts can be collaborative ventures with school districts. Administration programs in cooperation with school districts can offer workshops, seminars, and other programs designed to interest qualified women in pursuing careers in administration. Collaboratively developed scholarships and fellowships can be offered with some specifically earmarked for minority women. Principals and district administrators can assist in facilitating participation in these events. Student professional organizations affiliated with the administration program can plan special events to acquaint prospective students (inservice teachers) with preparation programs and opportunities for women in administration.

A longer-range recruitment strategy would target prospective administrators among students in undergraduate programs. Current administration students, inservice administrators and administration faculty can collaborate in developing modules to acquaint undergraduate students with administration as a long-term career goal. Undergraduates and inservice teachers can be

invited to special meetings of administration student organizations, for example, an annual workshop exploring administration as a career goal. Perhaps if women were encouraged to view administration as a career option early in their professional development, they would more frequently choose administration as a career goal and enter it at an earlier point. Furthermore, since administration provides a kind of career ladder for educators, the perception of administration as a viable career goal might attract some able, upwardly-mobile women to undergraduate teacher education - women who might otherwise prepare for a more nontraditional career.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation by current students and program graduates can identify possible sex inequities and provide valuable information to be used in future program planning and revision. Such data can be quite useful to program advisory boards as they make their recommendations.

Evaluation by current students can include evaluation of individual instructors/courses by all students as well as evaluation of the program as a whole by students as they complete the program. Since instructors/courses are typically evaluated through a questionnaire or rating scale, an item assessing sensitivity to women's issues could be easily incorporated. Similarly, students completing their program and program graduates could be asked to rate the program relative to its sensitivity to women's issues. Additional comments and recommendations could be invited. Questions about the quality of program adivsement (particularly career advisement) could ascertain whether or not there were any apparent gender differences. Evaluations of the program by prospective graduates and graduates could be analyzed for sex differences in responses throughout the instrument.

Responses to follow-up study questions such as "How might the program have better met your needs?" and "What program modifications would you recommend?" can be analyzed for sex differences. Any discovered differences could be addressed in future program planning.

GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

Follow-up studies of graduates can be most valuable in addressing women's issues if they are systematically conducted as longitudinal studies. Individual graduates can be tracked soliciting feedback from them annually or biannually following program completion to identify which graduates are working as administrators and their type of assignment - line or staff position. Graduates who are not employed as administrators should be asked to provide the reason(s) for their not being so employed. Apparent sex inequities in assignment may be identified and addressed.

PROGRAM SPONSORED EVENTS

Women's issues can be effectively addressed through seminars, workshops, and institutes sponsored by the program and collaboratively with local schools. While contributing to professional development and providing career information, such events can offer a setting in which networking can thrive. For women, networking can be particularly crucial to job placement and career advancement and best learned early in one's career.

Women's studies programs and women's services offices are likely to be receptive to jointly sponsoring events with administration programs. For example, women's studies programs could offer programs to help women better understand the nature of sex inequity in educational administration and some effective strategies for dealing with it. Women's services programs could offer assertiveness training workshops for women students.

ASSISTANCE TO GRADUATES

Induction programs have become fairly commonplace for first-year teachers. A parallel type of program can be valuable for new administrators - especially women who are making the transition to administration from a lengthy teaching career. (Since some administration program completers don't take administrative positions immediately upon program completion, induction support should be offered to them later, when needed.) The administration program in collaboration with the schools could train mentors and develop programs offering support designed to assist women and men in performing successfully in both line and staff administrative positions.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Administration preparation programs in collaboration with the schools can more fully address women's issues without expending excessive resources. Change requires recognition of the need and a commitment to modifying the status quo. In a time when many administration programs have a fairly balanced enrollment of male and female students, and when districts are anticipating many vacancies that will be created by administrators reaching retirement age, these are issues which can no longer be neglected.

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